



South Carolina Department of
**CHILDREN'S
 ADVOCACY**
Advocacy. Accountability. Service.

MONTHLY UPDATE

Department of Children's Advocacy Monthly Update
Connecting with and updating our community



I am pleased to provide you with the Department of Children's Advocacy's monthly newsletter which highlights June 2021. Our monthly update is created to share and connect with you - our community of partners, leaders, providers and advocates. Please contact me if you would like more information about our agency.

*-Amanda F. Whittle, J.D., CWLS
 State Child Advocate and DCA Director*

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A Message from the State Child Advocate and Director of the S.C. Dept. of Children's Advocacy

July 1, 2021 is the 2-year anniversary of the S.C. Dept. of Children's Advocacy.

A couple of weeks ago, a parent shared that his child recently moved to Sumter and became a participant in the Roads of Independence (ROI) program. The child has a diagnosis that presents a life-time challenge, and the parent shared that ROI was the best program he has experienced since beginning mental health services. That is a tremendous shout-out to the teamwork of ROI which includes two Continuum of Care (COC) staff. (See more about COC on page 5)

In March of this year, one of DCA's Investigators successfully resolved a complaint by identifying a major discrepancy with a situation and working with others to result in children being safer. Just a few weeks ago, a DCA Investigator's coordination and advocacy with other agencies and organizations assisted with locating and returning a child who ran away.



In May of 2021, during a meeting with four Greenville foster care review boards, Board members shared how they provide encouragement and hope for families as well as staff during their reviews including providing gift cards for DSS case managers. One of the board members said she wants to think of ways to make their positivity and support "contagious in the community."

Shout out for the many ways DCA's advocacy, spirit, persistence, and energy are contagious in the community! The advocacy, accountability and service of DCA staff and volunteers are essential to improve outcomes for children and families in South Carolina.



***I am grateful for the DCA Team as we
celebrate two years as a state agency!***

***~Amanda F. Whittle, J.D., CWLS
DCA Director and State Child Advocate***

DCA Advocates for Juvenile Justice Resources



The S.C. Department of Children's Advocacy (DCA) is charged, among other duties, with examining system-wide services; ensuring timely, safe, and effective services for children by state agencies; developing and promoting a broad vision of reform; and making recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly.

Since February of 2020, DCA has been actively engaged with the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Council (GJJAC) and Systems Improvement Committee. In April of 2021, DCA submitted a grant application focused on deinstitutionalization of status offenders and alternatives to detention. DCA Director Amanda Whittle and Deputy Director Kayla Capps have visited all of DJJ's regional evaluation centers, the Broad River Road Complex and the Juvenile Detention Center. These visits included meeting with staff and youth.

Whittle and Capps have been communicating with DJJ leadership regarding safety and reform as well as communicating with DJJ, DMH and DSS regarding placement and service array for South Carolina's children and youth. One of the issues that has proven frustrating for state agencies is the lack of placement options for youth in certain situations. As stated in DCA's 2019-2020 Annual Report, "Part of the Department of Children's Advocacy's broad vision for reform is to promote access and awareness of an array of services that allow children to safely remain in their homes and communities or in the least restrictive, most family-like setting based upon their needs with the understanding that some children will need to receive services in a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) or other out-of-home setting. DCA is engaged in sharing and identifying coordinated solutions regarding gaps in services primarily concerning qualified, quality intensive community service providers. The resulting recommendations should include measuring and tracking outcome data."

Our state currently does not have no-eject/no-reject placements. "No reject" would guarantee the availability of placement, and "no eject" would ensure that the placement would not be terminated until there was a clinical recommendation for discharge and transition. As a result of the lack of no eject/no reject placements, it is difficult for DSS, DMH and DJJ to obtain, and secure, placement of youth, particularly seriously mentally ill, justice-involved youth who need residential treatment and who also have emotional or behavioral challenges. When appropriate mental health facilities cannot be obtained and maintained, justice-involved youth remain at a DJJ facility such as the Broad River Road Complex (BRRC) or an evaluation center where they are not able to receive the mental health treatment they need.

The Department of Children's Advocacy continues to advocate for a robust service array *and* a robust placement array that are grounded in urgency, empathy and sustainability as shared [here](#).

Suicide Prevention Training for Department of Children's Advocacy



Suicide is THE leading cause of death for children between the ages of 10 and 17 in South Carolina. The Children's Committee's complete Data Reference Book can be viewed [here](#).

The Department of Children's Advocacy appreciates the availability of online suicide prevention training for our staff, FCRB Board member and GAL Program volunteers through the Department of Mental Health's Office of Suicide Prevention. All DCA staff completed suicide prevention training as of December 2020. Guardian ad Litem Program volunteers and Foster Care Review Board members are undergoing the training now. For more information, contact SuicidePrevention@childadvocate.sc.gov.



Safe Babies Courts Expand to Orangeburg



"Infants and young children are most vulnerable to child abuse and neglect, with more than one-quarter (28.5%) of victims of maltreatment under age three."

- Casey Family Programs (Read full article [here](#))

The South Carolina Infant Mental Health Association (SCIMHA)'s grant application submitted to the South Carolina Center for Rural and Primary Healthcare at the USC School of Medicine for the expansion of Safe Babies Courts (SBC) in Orangeburg has been awarded! The funding starts July 1st and runs for two years. In addition to supporting the cost of the SBC Community Coordinator in Orangeburg, the grant includes funding to build some of the infant and early childhood programs in Orangeburg that SBC families need.

In August of 2020, a grant was awarded to support piloting SBC in three South Carolina counties. SBC work is underway in Richland, Laurens and Spartanburg counties with involvement of Child Advocacy Centers (CACs), DSS, Guardian ad Litem Program, Richland County CASA, SCIMHA, Judges and community partners. The Department of Children's Advocacy is grateful for the opportunity SBC presents to strengthen families, promote permanency, support a robust service array, and reduce abuse and neglect.

S.C. Continuum of Care Helps Struggling Youth and Families

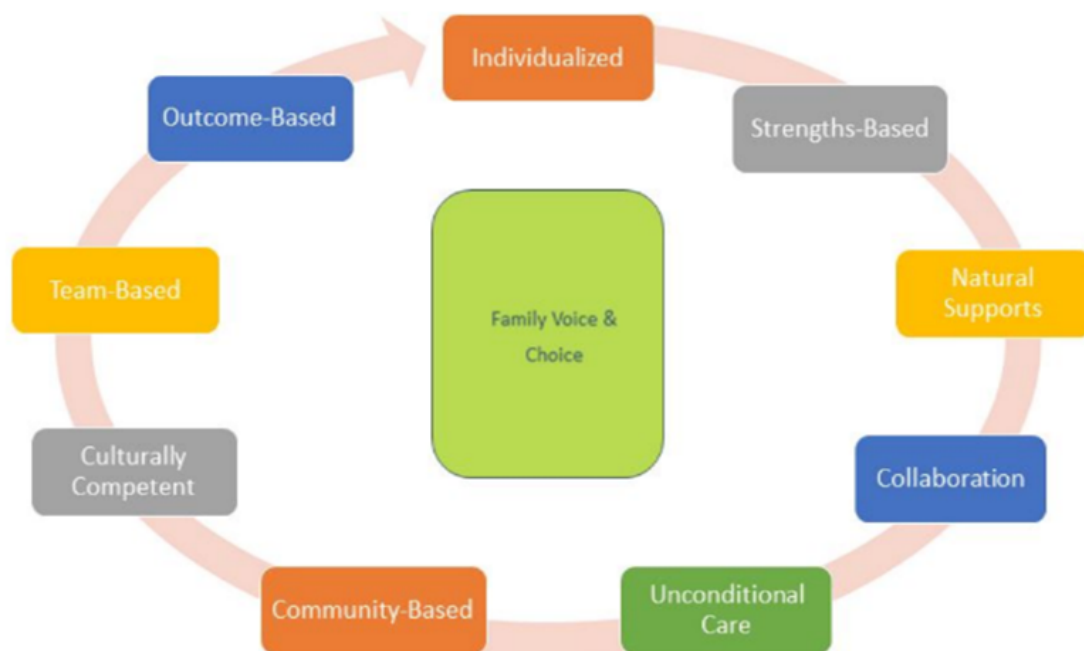
During a Joint Council for Children and Adolescents meeting on June 17, 2021, Parent Representative Kelly Troyer provided insight about her family's experience with the services provided by S.C. Continuum of Care. She shared how helpful Continuum of Care's services were for her son who exhibited a range of volatile emotions and delinquent behavior. She shared that some people told her he was a "bad kid," but the services he received through our system of care resulted in him, at the age of 25, being a successful young man.

S.C. Continuum of Care (COC) serves children with serious emotional and behavioral health diagnoses. COC uses High Fidelity Wraparound (HFW) to provide evidence-based intensive care coordination to help youth remain in their homes, schools and communities.



Do you know someone who is struggling with serious emotional or behavioral challenges and who needs help remaining in their home, school or community? S.C. Continuum of Care may be able to help. Learn more about eligibility and the application process [here](#).

Ten Principles of High-Fidelity Wraparound



State Child Advocate and Deputy Visit Youth, Staff and Facilities

State Child Advocate Amanda Whittle and Deputy Child Advocate Kayla Capps visited the South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind (SCSDB) as well as Department of Juvenile Justice facilities throughout the state during the month of June 2021. Visits to facilities were halted in March of 2020 as a result of the pandemic, and visits have resumed as facilities have eased their COVID-19 restrictions. DCA thanks SCSDB and DJJ for their assistance with scheduling and facilitating safe, productive visits during June:

June 9 - DJJ Midlands Evaluation Center (Columbia, SC)

June 14 - DJJ Upstate Evaluation Center (Union, SC)

June 15 - School for the Deaf and the Blind (Spartanburg, SC)

June 17 - DJJ Juvenile Detention Center (Columbia, SC)

June 21 - DJJ Broad River Road Complex (Columbia, SC)

June 25 - DJJ Broad River Road Complex (Columbia, SC)

June 28 - DJJ Broad River Road Complex (Columbia, SC)

June 30 - DJJ Coastal Evaluation Center (Ridgeville, SC)



**Geese enjoy the DJJ Broad River Road Complex
(June 2021)**



**DJJ Coastal Evaluation Center in Ridgeville, SC
(June 2021)**



**Tactile art at the S.C. School for the
Deaf and the Blind (SCSDB)
(June 2021)**



**Playground at the S.C. School for the
Deaf and the Blind (SCSDB)
(June 2021)**

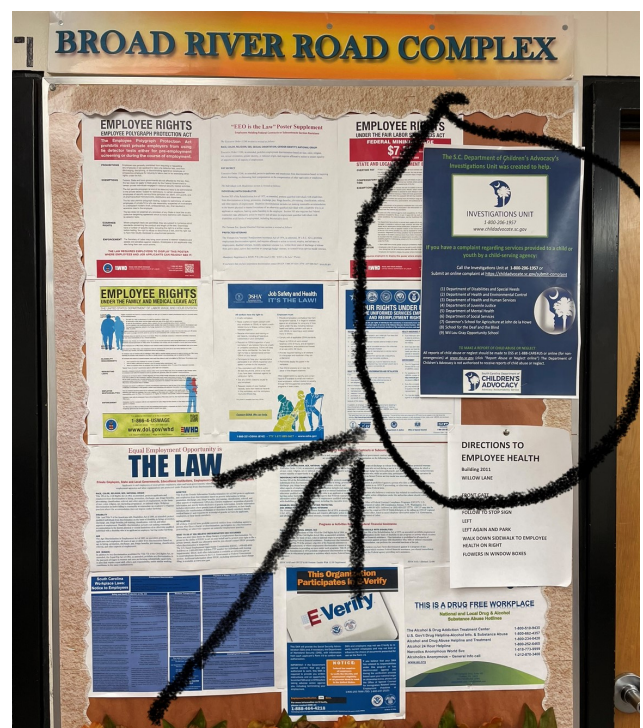
DCA Distributes Posters to Raise Awareness Regarding Investigations Unit



Approximately 150 posters were distributed in June 2021 to raise awareness regarding DCA's Investigations Unit.

During June 2021, DCA distributed approximately 150 posters to raise awareness regarding the role of its Investigations Unit. In addition, the nine agencies are required to publish DCA's contact information in a conspicuous place on their websites. For more information about DCA's Investigations Unit, please click [here](https://childadvocate.sc.gov); call us at 1-800-206-1957; or email us at info@childadvocate.sc.gov.

The Department of Children's Advocacy created an informational poster about its role of receiving, referring, monitoring and/or investigating complaints regarding services provided to children by nine child-serving agencies. Those agencies are the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (DDSN), Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), Department of Mental Health (DMH), Department of Social Services (DSS), the Governor's School for Agriculture at John de la Howe, School for the Deaf and the Blind, and Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School.



During a visit to BRRC on 6/28/2021, we saw posters displayed throughout the campus that were distributed earlier in the month.

DCA Resource Library

DCA'S RESOURCE LIBRARY IS AVAILABLE [HERE](#).



The Department of Children's Advocacy (DCA) frequently receives calls from individuals who need help and are requesting a referral to a service provider or resource. DCA launched its online Resource Library in May of 2021. [Check it out!](#)

S.C. Heart Gallery Promotes Forever Homes for Waiting Children



Jay'vion was born in 2011 and is interested in being adopted by a forever family. To learn more about Jay'vion, click [here](#).

Click [here](#) to learn more about foster care adoption at the [S.C. Heart Gallery website](#).

Jay'veon's Photographer:
Stan Foxworthy ©2021



Advocacy in Motion

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